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AUTHOR Humes, Ann
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ABSTRACT

The discourse classification systems used most frequently by reseachers in composition credit A. Bain, J. Moffett, J. Emig, J. Kinneavy, J. Britton, and R. Lloyd-Jones. A majority of the studies that have included discourse types as a major focus of their work were designed to investigate students' syntactic structures. Other studies focused on the composing processes, cognitive patterns, test conditions, cognitive factors, and audience awareness. Unfortunately, little reliable evidence can be gleaned from these studies. Researchers are either inconsistent in their use of the terms "types" and "modes" or confuse the two. Another problem is that the classification systems used to discuss results are not translatable into terms of other systems. Also, researchers sometimes make assertions about results based on an inadequate understanding of the discourse type within the system they used. In some reports researchers collapse the data and report on written discourse as a single category. Sometimes the inadequacy in the design is in the writing prompt itself. Some of the deficiencies can be removed by more thoughtful and extensive inquiry designs. A more difficult problem is the diversity of discourse classifications. A possible solution is to define discourse type through discourse-analysis studies that examine discourse by using a bottom-to-top approach, going from the small features in discourse to see which cluster together in a written product. The repeated cooccurrence for such features may provide a taxonomy of discourses and thus define discourse types that can be accepted as standards for all researchers. (HOD)

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DISCOURSE TYPE AND COMPOSITION RESEARCH

Ann Humes

ABSTRACT

Major systems for classifying discourse are reviewed. The research on composing in different discourse types is examined. The confusion caused by inconsistency in classifications and the inadequacies of research designs are discussed. Possible solutions to the problems are noted.

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DISCOURSE TYPE AND COMPOSITION RESEARCH

Ann Humes

Although everyone knows that discourse types levy differential demands on a writer, this aspect of composition has received little research attention. The paper first reviews major systems that have been used to classify written discourse. Next it describes and critiques studies that have attempted to determine how discourse type affects composing. It closes with a discussion of ameliorating methodology.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF DISCOURSE

The discourse classification systems used most frequently by researchers in composition credit Bain (1890), Moffett (1968), Emig (1971), Kinneavy (1971), Britton (1975), and Lloyd-Jones (1977). Other systems have been promulgated (e.g., Rockas, 1964; Wheelwright, 1968), but they are not generally found in research on the composing process.

Bain's system is still the most popular, although other systems may be more appropriate (Connors, 1981). Bain uses four types: argumentation, exposition, narration, and description. In argumentation, the writer argues a point of view, defends a position, or persuades someone to a stated viewpoint. In exposition, the writer presents ostensibly factual material. In narration, the writer conveys a sequence of events. In description, the writer conveys an image of people, places, or things. A frequent criticism of the system is that the modes overlap, so that any

composition may consist of several modes of writing. Stories, for example, generally include both discription and narration.

Moffett classifies compositions by distance in space and time, contending that the further the discourse is in space and time from its author, the more complex it is. Thus "what is happening" is classified as recording; "what happened" is reporting; "what happens" is generalizing; "what may happen" is theorizing or persuading.

Problems with this system are evident in that Moffett provides for the following:

Recording:	Socialized speech, plays
Reporting:	Correspondence, autobiography
Generalizing:	Biography, history
Theorizing:	Science, metaphysics

Correspondence does not necessarily tell "what happened"; the addressor may rationalize behavior or explain a situation; although autobiography and biography come under different classifications, both these forms can be interpreted as telling "what happened."

Emig's system uses only two categories, labeled "reflexive" and "extensive" because they (1) "have the virtue of relative unfamiliarity in discussing modes of discourse" (p. 37) and (2) "they suggest two general kinds of relations between the writing self and the field of discourse" (p. 37). Reflexive discourse requires the writer to play a contemplative role, asking what experience means; extensive discourse requires an active role, asking how the writer interacts with the environment.

The simplicity of a two-category system is also its weakness. "There are several not easily separable strands involved in this distinction between public and private or extensive and reflexive. First there is the source of content, either public knowledge or private introspection. Then there is the rhetorical stance, objective or involved. And then there is grammatical person, first person or third. We obviously need to get beyond simple dichotomies" (Hoetker, 1982, p. 385).

Kinneavy draws on communication theory to derive types corresponding to the four elements of the communication transaction-- encoder, audience, the reality symbolized, and the text itself. If the emphasis is on the encoder, the writer's aim is self-expression, and the result is expressive discourse. If stress is on eliciting a response from an audience, the aim is to persuade, and the result is persuasive discourse. When the emphasis is on the content, the subject matter of the discourse, the writer's aim is to present a clear picture of reality, and the result is referential discourse. However, when the stress is on the internal ordering of formal characteristics, the writer's aim is to give pleasure, and the result is literary discourse.

Kinneavy includes categorization of discourse within compositions by mode (i.e., strategy for developing discourse). Kinneavy specifies four modes--descriptive, narrative, classificatory, and evaluative, which, he claims, correspond to the traditional Bain categories: "descriptive," "narrative," "expository," and "persuasive."

Britton's system uses three categories--transactional, expressive, and poetic--based on the function of the discourse. The function of transactional writing is to get things done. The function of expressive discourse is to reveal the writer and the writer's consciousness. The function of poetic discourse is to focus on language for itself.

A problem with Britton's system is that the transactional category (e.g., informing, persuading, instructing) covers such a wide spectrum that it does not provide much information.

Lloyd-Jones' system uses the "communication triangle." Author-oriented writing is expressive, audience-oriented is persuasive, and subject-oriented discourse is explanatory. Because this system is employed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, it has been influential. However, Lloyd-Jones himself recognizes problems in the system when he admits that "if we had chosen a four-part model, such as the system elucidated fully by Kinneavy . . ., we might have had a more exacting and theoretically satisfying system, but one that was unnecessarily complex for describing impromptu writing in 20- or 25-minute exercises" (p. 38). Since it is not so "exacting and theoretically satisfying" as other models, its use in research design may be questionable.

Some differences in these six systems are merely labels as, for example, Britton's (1975) poetic discourse and Kinneavy's (1971) literary discourse. Whether other differences are simply matters of taste or matters of consequence is an empirical consideration which research should address.

THE RESEARCH ON COMPOSING IN DIFFERENT DISCOURSE TYPES

Some researchers have set out to study this matter directly. Other researchers did not specifically set out to study discourse types, but their investigations nevertheless yielded pertinent information. The literature is reviewed below accordingly.

Studies Specifically Investigating Discourse Types

A majority of the studies that have included discourse types as a major focus of their work were designed to investigate students' syntactic structures. In 1972, San Jose, as described in Perron (1976), analyzed the T-Units across modes of discourse (cf. Bain, above) in the writing of fourth grade students. Classroom teachers administered the samples in 20-minute time periods. San Jose's analyses revealed that the syntax in argumentation was the most complex, followed by exposition, narration, and description. However, the short time period for writing may have affected the findings.

Speech rather than written language was investigated by Pope (1974), but his findings are relevant to composing in discourse types. Two speech samples, one narrative and the other "explanatory," were elicited from 60 fourth grade students selected randomly. Students viewed one narrative film and one explanatory film. They then retold the narrative film and explained the phenomenon in the explanatory movie. Ten students insisted on responding in the narrative mode to the explanatory movie, so their data were eliminated from Pope's analysis.

Pope found that the T-Units in students' explanatory speech were significantly longer than those in their narrative speech, and that significantly more sentence-embedding transformations occurred in the explanatory speech than in the narrative speech. Furthermore, students' explanatory speech had significantly more transformations in headed and non-headed nominal structures and in adverbial structures. Pope noted one outstanding characteristic of students' explanatory speech: it contained more than twice as many subordinate clauses per T-Unit than did their narrative speech.

Unfortunately, this study either confused the terms "expository" and "explanatory" or purposely drew its discourse types from two different classification systems. As a discourse category, narrative is found only in the Bain system. Explanatory discourse is a category in the system outlined by Lloyd-Jones, and it overlaps two of the Bain categories--description and exposition.

Perron (1976, 1977) studied syntactic complexity in the discourse of 153 children at three ability levels within grades three, four, and five. All the children were white students from schools in Atlanta. Students wrote twice a week for two weeks, each time composing in a different discourse mode--description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. In each of the three grade levels, syntactic complexity varied significantly across the modes, with argumentation producing the most complex syntax, and narrative, the least. Perron comments:

> The apparent stretching influences of the modes of discourse in writing imply that the writing mind actively interprets purpose via different levels of syntactic complexity. (p. 14)

Crowhurst and Piche (1979) studied the effect of intended audience and type of discourse on the syntactic complexity of compositions written by sixth and tenth grade students, 60 boys and 60 girls. The study controlled for topic by using three pictures, and by prompting description, narration, and argumentation with each picture.

At grade ten, the modes contrasted significantly for words per T-Unit, with argument having the most, followed by description and narration; for words per clause, with description and argumentation equal and with both modes greater than narration; for clauses per T-Unit, with argument greater than narration and description. At grade 6, the modes contrasted significantly on words per T-Unit and clauses per T-Unit. In all instances, argumentation was more complex than narration and description. However, discovering that one of the prompts elicited less complex syntax across all three modes than was evoked by the other two stimulus pictures raises overall doubt about the study.

In a subsequent study, Crowhurst (1980) examined the relationship between syntactic complexity and quality ratings of the narrative and argumentative writing of students in grades six, ten, and twelve. Arguments with high syntactic complexity were rated as significantly better than arguments with low syntactic complexity at both grades ten and twelve, but the difference was not significant at grade six. At grade ten, narrations with low syntactic complexity received significantly superior ratings over narrations with high syntactic complexity, suggesting the possibility that relatively simple syntax may be an attribute of good narrative writing.

Cooper and Watson (1981) examined (1) whether nine-year-old children with average or superior writing ability adapt their syntax for different discourse purposes, (2) which syntactic features are involved in the adaptation, and (3) whether these syntactic variations occur for both superior and average writers. Students wrote and revised six essays in each of three types of discourse: expression, persuasion, and explanation.

Cooper and Watson found that 30 of the 51 comparisons for discourse types were statistically significant. In contrasting "ability," Cooper and Watson determined that average nine-year-old writers "deploy the syntactic repertoire in a particular discourse type in just the same way as superior nine-year-old writers. If a superior writer produces longer T-Units in persuasive discourse or uses more adverb clauses of condition and concession, etc., then so do average writers" (p. 25). But again, the report raises doubts. Students' essays were selected by classroom teachers, and these teachers were chosen "for their special interest and competence in teaching writing" (p. 7). So average writers from these classrooms are not average.

The other observation is that the manner in which the data are reported may mislead some readers. Specifically, the Cooper and Watson table reporting most- and least-likely features of the three discourse types lists adverb clauses of cause, for example, as a most-likely structure for persuasion, and adverb phrases of time as a least-likely one. These rankings are based on which of the three discourse types has the highest/lowest mean for that feature. However, the means of these

syntactic features contradict that interpretation. The mean for the" most frequent" construction, adverbial clauses of cause, was 3.57; the mean for the "least likely" feature, adverbial phrases of time, was 11.05.

Syntax was also investigated by Witte and Davis (1982), who examined stability of T-Unit length within and across students for one discourse type--informative discourse. Collecting writing samples in informative discourse (i.e., classification essays and comparison/contrast essays) from college freshmen, Witte and Davis found that T-unit length appeared stable within the essays, but variability among students within discourse type appears larger than variability among the informative discourse samples of one student's essays.

The studies of syntax described above comprise most of the body of research on discourse types. However, other studies have focused on other differential characteristics of discourse types. In Emig's seminal study (1971) of the composing processes of eight high school seniors classified as good writers, students composed as the investigator observed them and recorded their oral composing. Emig found that episodes of composing reflexive discourse were characterized by more discernible periods of prewriting, pausing, and reformulating than were episodes of composing extensive discourse. However, Emig's discourse categories are broad and rely somewhat upon student self-reports.

Matsuhashi (1981) studied the pauses of four high school seniors, skilled writers, as they composed. She used two cameras to videotape the writers; one camera was aimed at the writer, and the other, at the

writing pad the student used. Each participant composed in four discourse types, although Matsuhashi reports on only three. She states that pause time increased according to the type of discourse students were composing, in the following order: reporting, persuading, and generalizing; reporting and generalizing were significantly different, at the .0001 level, while generalizing and persuading were not. Mean pause time prior to T-Units beginning with initial, embedded modifying structures was significant at the .003 level between reporting and generalizing. Pause time for abstraction levels (superordinate, subordinate, or coordinate T-Units) was significant in generalizing, but not in reporting or persuading.

Birnbaum (1982) included discourse considerations when she investigated the reading and writing behaviors of eight good readers and writers, fourth and seventh graders, in order to identify shared cognitive- linguistic patterns that might mark both processes. Each student was videotaped six times while writing and was also audiotaped while composing aloud. Students composed in three discourse types--expressive, poetic, and transactional. Birnbaum found that differences in the writing episodes occurred when a student wrote a poetic text that subsequently received a high rating. Birnbaum notes that the poetic discourse was characterized by "longer pauses between thought segments or drafts and more reformulations" (p. 251).

In a study of writing assessment, Quellmalz, Capell, and Chou (1980) examined the essays and paragraphs of 200 eleventh and twelfth grade students who were randomly assigned to one of four testing conditions.

These conditions were defined by different combinations of discourse types for the writing tasks. In conditions one and two, students wrote two essays and one paragraph in the same discourse type; condition one students wrote expository texts, and condition two students wrote narrative texts. In conditions three and four, all students wrote one narrative and one expository essay, while half wrote a narrative paragraph and half, an expository paragraph.

The texts were evaluated for general impression, focus, organization, support, and mechanics. Correlations between essay scores for students writing two essays in the same discourse mode were higher than those for students writing in different discourse modes. The general impression and organization categories differentiated the most between the two discourse modes. Quellmalz, Capell, and Chou state that "students' performances on writing-task differences in discourse mode suggest that (1) students' writing skills vary in the different discourse modes, and (2) discourse-mode score variability seems to be differentially distributed across writing subskills" (p. 13).

Other Studies

In a study analyzing evaluators' responses to college freshmen's essays, Nold and Freedman (1977) intended to prompt two kinds of argumentation; however, one prompt actually elicited explanatory/ expository discourse (i.e., given two statements, students were asked to explain how they were alike and different) and the other, persuasive discourse--what they term "personal opinion" (i.e., given a statement of an issue, students were to give their opinion on the issue and reasons

for that opinion). Nold and Freedman found that "personal opinion topics . . . are characterized by more writing and a greater variation in amount of response" (p. 170). They conjecture that "mode of discourse may affect the number of instances of free final modification" (p. 170).

Perl (1979) studied the composing processes of five unskilled college writers. Students wrote in both the extensive and reflexive modes for two topics. Perl provides detailed data on one student's composing behavior. The data reveal that this student spent nearly twice as much time in prewriting for extensive than for reflexive discourse. Although many factors may have caused the longer prewriting period and although the evidence is for a single writer, the paucity of information on the influence of discourse type makes this bit of information noteworthy. However, it should be noted that these results contradict Emig's (1971) findings about extensive and reflexive discourse.

In studying audience awareness of professional writers, Berkenkotter (1981) prompted persuasive, informative, and narrative discourse. Berkenkotter reports that she had expected the professional writers' rhetorical training to affect their sense of audience, but discovered that "two other factors play a more influential role than previous training: 1) how the writer perceived the composing task, which determined the kind of discourse he or she produced, and 2) whether the audience was explicitly stated or was implied by the kind of discourse the subject chose" (p. 390). Berkenkotter adds that as she coded the data, she became "increasingly concerned with the question of why the kind of discourse determines whether or not the writer's attention remains upon the audience" (p. 393).

PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING EVIDENCE ON DISCOURSE TYPES IN COMPOSING

Relatively little reliable evidence can be gleaned from existing research. Researchers are either inconsistent in their use of the terms "types" and "modes" or confuse the two. Cooper and Watson (1981) explain the "problem":

> One problem . . . is lack of agreement about what to call the kinds of writing products in different communication contexts or situations. This persistent problem results from a continuing confusion between modes and types of writing in school and college rhetorics. Following current discourse theory (Kinneavy, 1971), we would reserve term types for the kind of writing produced in the four basic communication situations . . . we would use the term modes to indicate the various strategies writers may choose to achieve their major purpose in each communication situation: description, narration, comparison, contrast, definition, analysis, etc. (p. 4).

Yet Cooper and Watson themselves contribute to the "problem" because their modes of discourse differ from Kinneavy's modes (cf. above, descriptive, narrative, classificatory, and evaluative).

With some researchers using mode to describe different strategies, some using both "types" and "modes," and some using "modes" synonymously with "types," it is difficult to interpret the actual nature of the discourse and the focus of the research.

The classification systems researchers use to discuss their results are not translatable, either in part or whole, into terms of other systems. For example, studies cited above (e.g., Cooper & Watson, 1981; Matsuhashi, 1981; Perron, 1976 and 1977) use different classification systems in presenting positive results, so the results can only be compared for one discourse type: persuasion/argumentation. Furthermore, descriptive discourse in the

one system may be either expressive or explanatory in the other, depending on the actual prompt and resulting sample; narrative in one is likely to be expressive in the other, but may be explanatory.

Consequently, a research design that uses one classification system may produce results that may have been different within a different classification system. The Witte and Davis (1980) project is a prime example. Witte and Davis collected two samples of descriptive discourse and one of narrative discourse. One description was of a person and the other, of a "thing." Students wrote the descriptions consecutively during extended class time (a problem in design because of writers' fatigue). The narrative sample was collected during a separate class session. Although Witte and Davis found that the length of T-units was different across narration and description, they also found that length differed within the two descriptive samples. However, different classifications may have produced different results: The topics used to elicit descriptive discourse described two tasks that, in another system, may have elicited one set of essays classified as expressive and one set classified as explanatory. The narrative classification caused a problem:

> A possible (sic) difficulty with the narrative assignment is that it is virtually impossible to write a good narrative without including some description. (p. 14)

Finally, researchers sometimes make assertions about results based on inadequate understanding of the discourse type within the system they are using. The previously cited Nold and Freedman study (1977) is an example. Stewart and Grobe (1979) provide another example. They

compared teachers' quality ratings of essays in terms of syntactic structure across grades. They assert that all were given expository tasks, yet the task at grade eight was a letter to the principal to convince him that he should supply funds needed for uniforms. In the Bain system that Stewart and Grobe used, this is not an expository task.

These examples are few, but they are representative.

Many of the best inquiries on composing do not consider discourse type, (e.g., Flower and Hayes, 1981; Schumacher, 1982; and Bechtel, 1979).

Some studies examine only one discourse type and thus ignore the potential interactions. For example, some important studies of the revising process deal with only one discourse type (e.g., Beach, 1979; Faigley & Witte, 1981), yet discourse type can influence revising behavior (cf. Birnbaum, 1982). Ignoring the possible effects of discourse type can also affect results of syntactic studies, as is exemplified by a landmark study of syntactic structures in children's oral and written discourse (O'Donnell, Griffen, and Norris, 1967). O'Donnell et al. dealt only with narrative discourse, which is characterized by relatively simple syntax (cf. Crowhurst above).

The effects caused by limiting this study to narrative discourse are suggested by Pope's (1974) study. Pope compared O'Donnell's data for narrative discourse with his own data on multiple discourse types and found that "except for the coordinated structures, . . . the syntactic complexity in the explanatory speech of the fourth graders in this study is comparable to that of O'Donnell's fifth and seventh graders" (p. 224).

Another study that used one discourse type to investigate complexity of syntax was undertaken by Neilsen and Piche (1981), who examined, specifically, the influence of "headed nominal complexity" on quality ratings. The prompt they provided teachers was a picture, "Winter Scene at a Bus Stop." The results of the study did not confirm a relationship between quality rating of writing and syntactic complexity. However, if the essays were eliciting expressive/narrative or expressive/descriptive discourse, then complex syntax is not characteristic of the discourse and thus would not be rewarded with high ratings.

Focusing on only one discourse type may have biased the developmental work of Stahl (1977). Stahl examined the structure of second, fifth, and eighth grade students' compositions for evidence of developmental differences, but he elicited only descriptive discourse. Considering multiple discourse types might have altered Stahl's conclusions about development.

Still another one-discourse study with possibly biased conclusions is that of Hake and Williams (1981). Hake and Williams examined only essays that required a statement of opinion and support for that opinion, a persuasive task, and found that teachers rated such essays higher when they were comprised of a complex nominal style. If teachers had also rated other discourse types, the complex style may not have fared so well, as is evidenced by the previously cited results of Quellmalz et al. (1980) and Crowhurst (1980) on narrative discourse.

Reports of some studies frustrate reviewing for evidence on discourse type because the researchers collapse the data and report on

written discourse as a single category, although they elicit different types. Sometimes this collapsing is a necessary, although unfortunate part of the design, other times it is not.

In an instance of the former category, Dilworth, Reising, and Wolfe (1978) analyzed 45 superior and 45 "representative papers," as determined by classroom teachers. Given a poem, students were to write 200 to 300 words about either the feeling caused by the poem or the meaning of the poem. The analysis revealed no significant difference between superior and typical papers in words per T-unit. However, results may have been different if the design had allowed for the essays to be grouped for analysis by discourse type, perhaps as expressive essays and explanatory essays, with a balanced number of essays in each type.

Another instance of the former type of collapsing is that performed by Hunt (1965). Hunt investigated the characteristic syntactic structures of students at three grade levels. Students wrote on a variety of topics that were amenable to development through different discourse types. However, data were reported in terms of a sole category, written discourse. A review of the topics reveals that the discourse type shifted in proportion as the grade levels increased, moving away from a focus on expression/narration toward explanation/ exposition and persuasion. Consequently, the shifting proportion itself possibly confounded the type and sequence of syntactic structures identified at the various grade levels, but determining this is impossible because the data were collapsed.

An instance of the latter type of collapsing, i.e., when it is not part of the original design, is found in the study by Sommers (1978). Sommers collapsed most of her data in her important study of the revision processes of students and professional adults, although she had originally provided for an analysis of three discourse types: expressive, explanatory, and persuasive. Sommers reports on most of the data in combined totals, saying she collapsed the data because she observed no notable differences in revision strategies across the types. However, she lists revisions by discourse type for four subjects, two students and two professional adults, and the distribution of the changes is interestingly uneven. A summary of that data is displayed below in Table 1. Even though Sommers observed no differences, publishing non-collapsed, raw data for all participants would have permitted other researchers to perform other legitimate analyses, particularly since her original design allowed for discourse differentiation.

Table 1

Sommers' Data on Changes by Discourse Types

Subject	Expressive	Explanatory	Persuasive
1 (Student)	1	9	3
2 (Student)	4	4	6
3 (Adult)	2	10	13
4 (Adult)	3	3	0

Sometimes the inadequacy in the design is in the writing prompt itself (e.g., Nold and Freedman, 1977; Stewart and Grobe, 1970). A prompt may elicit a type of discourse other than the one intended by the researcher. For example, Bridwell (1980) in her study of high school seniors' revising processes, devised a prompt to elicit explanatory discourse, but some students chose to write persuasive discourse in response to the explanatory prompt. However, devising good prompts is an exacting task since even a subtle suggestion can be influential (Humes, 1980), and Bridwell's prompt did not adequately control for the discourse characteristics. The prompt asked students to write about a place they had seen, something they had done, or something they had learned. However, the first line of the prompt states, "Everybody knows of something that is worth talking about" (p. 201). Bridwell herself may have signaled persuasion for some students by using, in the first line, the word "worth," which suggests opinion.

A similar case is provided by Witte and Daly's (1982) study of the relationship between syntactic complexity and quality ratings. Witte and Daly intended to control for discourse type by eliciting only explanatory discourse. However, analysis of the prompts reveals that while one, on making aluminum, was a prompt for explanatory discourse, the other, on the use of alcohol and marijuana, could have prompted persuasive discourse because of the controversy usually surrounding this emotional issue.

Sometimes a prompt is so open that it elicits multiple discourse types. Berkenkotter (1981), in her study of audience awareness, received

a variety of discourse from her participants: Four writers chose to narrate the history of their choice, three to inform the audience about their field, and three to change their audience's way of thinking about their discipline.

Mosenthall and Na (1981) also provide evidence that an open prompt may elicit different discourse from different students. In their study, students were given a picture to describe. The type of composition a student wrote correlated with the type of verbal response pattern that a student most often adopted in verbally interacting with a teacher. Specifically, imitative responders (i.e., those whose interaction pattern adds no new information to the teacher's preceding utterance) wrote more descriptive essays; independent, non-contingent responders (i.e., students whose interaction pattern adds no new information to a teacher's preceding utterance) wrote more creative essays; contingent students (i.e., students whose interaction pattern adds new information that clarifies or adds to the old information in the teacher's utterance) wrote more interpretive essays.

WHAT TO DO

Some of the deficiencies cited can be ameliorated by more thoughtful and extensive inquiry designs. A more difficult problem is the diversity of discourse classifications and the misunderstandings and misuse of those classifications. Standardization of classification systems would solve this problem, but probably nothing short of fiat could accomplish that feat. Furthermore, how can one system be selected as the standard, when, as Hoetker comments, "we do not know how to define 'mode of discourse' operationally" (p. 389)?

Perhaps the solution is to define discourse type through discourse-analysis studies that examine discourse by using a bottom-to-top approach--going from the small features in discourse to see which cluster together in a written product. It is common knowledge, for example, that spatial ordering, spatial transitions, and sensory descriptors will co-occur in some discourse. Studies can discover the other features that cluster with these features. The repeated co-occurrence for such features may provide a taxonomy of discourses and thus define discourse types that can be accepted as standards for all researchers. Although this will "overthrow" current classification systems, such evolution is the best solution.

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